

# The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, October 8. 1695.

Quest. 1. **W**AS there any one of the Jewish Rabbins, who was of any repute, that has given us an account of the Jews baptizing of children when they profelyted them?

Ans. Several of the Rabbins mention that custom, the Talmud gives us an account of it, and Maimonides in his treatise of slaves says, that if an israelyte found a child, and baptized it in the name of a proselyte *בן נכרי* it became a proselyte from that very moment. From whence 'tis very plain 'twas in use amongst 'em.

Quest. 2. How did the Jews understand these words of our Saviour in St. John. Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?

Ans. The Jews took these words in a sence very different from ours, and indeed their interpretation seems unnatural enough; they thought that to be born again meant the vigorous observing of their ceremonies, and especially the tradition they had concerning phylacteries; and very strict they were in their observations of this tradition, as a story the Talmud relates to us of one Rabban Gamaliel will sufficiently shew. For this man even of his wedding night recited his Phylacteries, upon which his disciples speaking thus to him, have we not heard that a bridegroom is not obliged to read his phylacteries? He answered, I shan't be so complaisant to any one, as for their sakes to quit the yoke of the Kingdom so much as for one hour. And by the Kingdom of God or of Heaven they understood, the state of the Jewish Church under the Messiah.

Quest. 3. I am a young man aged about 21, none of the meanest birth, the only child of my family left unprovided for. My father dying young left my Mother, and the Estate in great trouble and charge; she took care before she dyed of the bringing up her children as well as she could, and they are all disposed off but my self, who am left destitute of Friends and Acquaintance: I have none, and nothing to depend upon but what my father left me; and of that I do not expect (nor can come) above 1 par. Therefore I cannot depend much upon that, but must endeavour some other way to live in the world, now I am in it. Therefore do desire your learned advice which way you think best I may dispose of my self, to live honestly and in repute with the World. Gentlemen, you have here my writing, and I have a Proportionable share of Arithmetic, I'm sober, honest, and careful, &c. but no great Scholar. Therefore Gentlemen, be pleased to answer this Request with your best Advice, (I being resolved to follow it) what think you of a Commission for a Military office? but there you'll say, I want friends: Gentlemen, your advice and answer will be very thankfully received, by your friendless servant.

Ans. 'Tis almost impossible that any person shou'd be so totally destitute of Friends, especially having Brothers or Sisters settled in the World, who if not capable of themselves immediately to serve you, yet may be able to do it by some of their Friends or Acquaintance, to whom you may apply your self; and perhaps by their interest and the little Money you have, they may be capable of putting you in some place, either Military or Civil, for where such extraordinary qualities meet in a Youth, every honest man who knows it, will be willing to serve him; but if your Friends can't assist you in this, 'tis like they may to Write in some of the Offices about Town, or else help you to be Book-keeper to some Merchant, which employment you'll soon understand, knowing already so much of Arithmetick. Yet supposing all this to fail, you write so pretty an hand, that if you go into some considerable country town, and undertake to teach writing and Arithmetick, 'tis morally impossible that you shou'd at first miss of so much employment as will afford you necessities, and no doubt but you may

soon expect conveniencies too. We propose the country rather than the town, because here a beginner without a good acquaintance can't expect much encouragement, there being so many extraordinary good masters. Perhaps you may reject this advice looking upon a country School-Master to be below your birth, but you ought to consider what your present circumstances are, not what you was born; we think such an employment much to be preferred to want, or the being obliged to friends for bread; and have known Gentlemen both well born, and the next heirs to two or three thousands a year, who have been glad, that that they cou'd maintain themselves after this manner; and whether born well or not, or of whatsoever employment, an honest and good man, deserves every ones esteem and respect.

Quest. 4. What was the Jews manner of admitting proselytes?

Ans. When they received a proselyte, they first askt him, if it was not for some worldly consideration that he imbraced the Jewish Religion, as, through fear, the desire of riches, or for the love of some handsom Israelite? If he assured them it was not, then they proceeded, and represented to him the difficulty there was in observing the law, and the punishments which were inflicted on those who broke it: But for fear of discouraging him, they also told him the recompenses the law promised; and further added that altho Israel lived miserably in this world, God had prepared a felicity for him, which he kept concealed, the possession of which they shou'd be assured of if they observed the law: That the reason why God did not make the Israelites happy upon Earth, was to prevent their becoming proud: And tho other nations seemed happy at present, yet they shou'd perish Eternally in the life too come. After which they told him if he repented the having presented himself to be received into the number of proselytes, he might withdraw if he pleased; but if he convinced them he continued firm in the same mind, they circumcised him, and when he was cured, they led him to some place where there was water, into which he presently went in up to the Neck; while he stood in this manner, the three inferiour Judges of the place recited to him divers precepts of the law; after which he plunged himself all over head and ears in the water, and then came out in a moment. If it was a woman who was baptized, it was women who assisted her to go into the water; the Judges standing a great way off the place whilst she went in, and turning their backs towards her when she came out.

Quest. 5. When did the assyrian Monarchy begin?

Ans. The General account is, that it was the first monarchy in the world, the great monarchs of which were Nimrod, Belus, Ninus, Semiramis, Ninias, Sardanapalus, &c. But this antient Chronology is all contradicted by one, George Herwart, who affirms that the Assyrian empire begun only with Phul Beloch, who was the Belus of the Greeks; as Ninus was the Tiglak-phul-assur of the Scripture, and that the Belshazzar in Daniel, was the Belas-Assur, or Assyrian Belus, who had the Government of Syria and Assyria, in the time of Cyrus the younger, or a little before; which Chronologist also says, that the Temple of Belus which was at Babylon, was ruined by this same Cyrus, and that it was he and not the first Cyrus which the Prophet Daniel speaks of. He also says that the fourth King spoken of in Daniel 11. 2. Was Darius Codoman, the fourth after Darius the Bastard, who made War against Alexander King of Greece. We incline to the first account, but leave our readers to determine as they please.

Quest. 6. Pray do me the favour to consider these following

following verses in the twenty ninth Chapter of Genesis, and tell me your thoughts, whether Jacob had really served several years to Laban when he gave him Leah, and seven years after, before he had Rachel given him to wife.

20. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had for her.

21. And Jacob said, give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

25. And in the morning when he saw it was Leah, he said to Laban, what hast thou done, did I not serve with thee for Rachel?

27. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also, for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

*Ans.* He was so far from serving fourteen, that he did not serve the first seven years before he married her, but afterwards: from thence it is said, that they seem'd to him but few days; whereas the time would rather have seem'd long, had he not been married to her, for as Solomon says, hope deferred makes the heart sick. In the 21 verse, where he says to Laban give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, by these words he meant it was time he was married, he was now at least seventy six years old: And Esau who was of the same age had been married about thirty six years, for he was but about forty years old when he married, Gen. 26. 34. It is not improbable but that Jacob may in these words also refer to the months trial, mentioned verse 14. It's certain they can't be meant of his seven years service, which will appear evident to any one who considers these two or three following reasons against it. First, it must then be supposed that Jacob had twelve children in the space of seven years, Gen. 30. 25, 31, 41. Which is by no means allowable. For Leah had seven at seven several births, which might well take up seven years. Besides, 'tis certain she intermitted bearing some time. Gen. 29. 35. and Gen. 30. 17. And in the mean while we have an account of the birth of Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher, before Leah bore Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah. Gen. 30. Secondly, this opinion would suppose Reuben to have been but four years old at most, when he brought the Mandrakes to his mother. For after this his mother not being then with child, bore three children at three several births. And 'tis likely enough that Joseph was born after this, Gen. 30. 22. This opinion is contradicted by Jacobs age, who was when he went to Laban about seventy six years old, and the birth of Hezron and Hamul, Ch. 46. 12. Also forbid us to receive it, according to which Judah could not be above three or four years older than Joseph, consequently not above forty three, or forty four years old, when he with his grand children went into Egypt, Joseph being then at most but forty years old, Gen. 41. 46. To reconcile all which, it must be supposed (by those who hold this opinion) that Judah married at twelve, and had Er when he was thirteen years old; that Er married at twelve, and Onan at the same age. Tamar stay'd for Shela after the days were multiplied and Judahs wife dyed. Gen. 38. 12. And then she bore Pharez to Judah: We'll allow but three years for this, and then supposing Pharez to marry at twelve years old, and that he had Hezron and Hamul (taking them for twins) at the age of thirteen, and that they went into Egypt at one year old, all this amounts but to forty three years. These things considered will we think justly overthrow that opinion, that Jacob served seven years before he married Leah. His words are, only that I may go in, &c. And not take her away, for that he could not justly do till he had served seven years. In the 25 verse, these words, did not I serve thee, must be understood as if he had said, not only Covenant to serve thee, but actually served thee, and gave thee a proof of my industry for a month, (as in verse 14.) And by the 27 verse 'tis very plain that he had Rachel immediately after Leah, for Laban only requires him to fulfill her (Leahs) week; that is keep the solemnity of seven days feasting,

which space was allowed for marriage feasts. Judg. 14. 12.

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